UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of such materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-479-9717 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

https://archive.org/details/bib292251

disk IX
O.K. 12/7/..

A TRIBUTE TO EPHRAIM NETANEL

by Zippora Feigenbaum (nee Netanel)

Ramat Gan, Israel

Netanel, Ephraim, of blessed memory
Son of Aaron and Miriam
Born 1928 in Troyanuvka, district of Wolyn, Poland
Killed in Action December 26, 1948 in the Harel Brigade, Israel Defense Force
Buried in Kiryat Anavim

It is unthinkable that this young boy, Ephraim Netanel of Troyanuvka, should not be remembered and eulogized.

When World War II broke out, he was 11 years old, and when the atrocities began in our town he was 13, a boy of bar-mitzva age who, along with many others his age, was not able to celebrate the occasion.

He was a very special person: stubborn in his ways, determined in his goals and proud of his Jewish heritage. This pride was exhibited whenever Christian children in the street and in the Ukrainian school used the words "dirty zid" --- a common occurrence. He never stood by submissively, but frequently got into ~~the~~ fights with the Ukrainian youngsters and was more than once expelled from school. To be allowed to return to his studies was no easy matter.

This pride he absorbed from his grandfather Kalman. Who from Troyanuvka did not know this devout and learned Jew? His last years were dedicated solely to the study of Torah. Every Sabbath Ephraim and his cousins Isaac, Aaron and Avremele, together with their father Yankel, were at grandfather's side. They studied Gemara and sang Sabbath zmirot (songs) that rang into the streets. I believe that Ephraim's grandfather Kalman and his books were the source of Ephraim's deep pride in his background and in his people.

In the fall of 1942, when the Germans decided to annihilate the Jews of Manyevitz and its surroundings, Ephraim and his family were among those who managed to escape the Germans and the Ukrainian militia and reach the nearby forest. In spite of his young age, Ephraim was mature in his ability to adapt to the new and difficult living conditions. An important factor in survival was the sense of orientation. Ephraim excelled at finding his way among the tall trees and heavy undergrowth, with no path, and in knowing how to go out at night to the village to get food and return to the same spot from which he had left. Ephraim was among the few who had this fine sense of direction, and it was he who led groups from place to place. Even in the terrible cold of winter, with his frozen and infected feat wrapped in rags, he stubbornly insisted on continuing to lead.

A few months after we had come to the forest, the Germans came to realize that we were not to be found easily, and they decided to spread the rumor that the edict of annihilation had been cancelled. Many of the starving and freezing forest-people believed this hoax and returned t to town. It is thanks to Ephraim's stubbornness that we didn't follow the others. He claimed that he didn't believe a word the Germans said and that he preferred to die here, not by their hand.

Now after so many years, I wonder how that young boy had the wisdom to judge so correctly. Because of him we survived!

In 1943 we first met young Jewish men who had joined the partisans, and they accepted the able and fit from among our group into their ranks. Ephraim was rejected because of his young age and because of his childish looks. How he envied Pessach Reiter, 2 or 3 years older, whose job it was to extract explosive powder from undetonated bombshells for the various missions against the German army. This very dangerous work was carried out under primitive conditions, and after a short time, Pessach was killed. Later, Ephraim joined the Russian partisan unit under "Max."

Despite the fact that in those difficult times death was very close to us all, we had hope, however faint, that at the end of the war we would still be

alive. But what then? Where would we go? It was clear that if we survived, our aim was to reach Eretz Yisrael.

When Ephraim was free to leave the forest, the war was still raging. He reached Lodz, Poland, and joined the youth movement "Dror" which helped him realoze his dream. He sailed on the immigrant ship "Theodor Herzl," but it was intercepted by the British off the coast of Palestine. After bitter fighting, all were transferred to Cyprus, yet another station on the road to his goal. It was here that he volunteered for the Palmach in preparation for what was to come in Israel. The slogan was and remained "Never Another Holocaust."

When the War of Independence broke out, he lowered his age (men were not allowed into the country) and arrived as a fighter in the Palmach. He was appointed as a platoon commander in the Harel Brigade which fought in the Jerusalem hills for the liberation of the city. But even after the battles of Jerusalem were won, bands of Arabs were wreaking havoc in the Negev. and, after a few days of fierce fighting, on the eve of Hannuka, December 26, 1948, at Udj el Hafir, Ephraim was killed by an enemy bullet.

Thus ended the life of Ephraim Netanel, a son of Troyanuvkas who throughout his young life had fought in the defense of his people. He was buried alongside 405 other soldiers of the Harel Brigade. In a row of headstones are engraved the few words "Immigrated in 1948. Killed in 1948."

Translated from Yiddish to Hebrew
by Yehuda Merin

His battalion was transferred to the Negev